

country because of this. I want you all to understand that. I'm not even sure I can explain it to you.

One of the incidents of school killing last year occurred in my home State. It's a small State. I was Governor there 12 years. I knew the people involved; it was heartbreaking. One of the mothers of one of the children who was killed still works with us for safer schools and safer childhoods. And all America grieved. But I think they thought, "Oh, this is terrible, I wish somebody would do something about this."

But somehow, when this happened here—maybe because of the scope of it, and I think mostly because of you, how you reacted, all of you, the relief workers, the law enforcement people, the family members who were brave enough to speak—there was a different reaction. People thought, "This has happened in my neighborhood; what can I do?" I say that because you have a unique chance—a chance—to make sure that the children of Columbine are never forgotten.

But first, you have to deal with you and your lives. You're all left with searing memories and scars and unanswered questions. There has to be healing. There has to be answers. And for those things that will not heal or cannot be answered, you have to learn to go on with your lives.

I hope you have been comforted by the caring not only of your neighbors but of your country and people from all around the world. All America has looked and listened with shared grief and enormous affection and admiration for you. We have been learning, along with you, a lot about ourselves and our responsibilities as parents and citizens.

When America looks at Jefferson County, many of us see a community not very different from our own. We know if this can happen here, it can happen anywhere. And we see with admiration the fundamentally strong values and character of the people here, from the students to the school officials, to the community leaders, to the parents.

I think most Americans have looked at you and thought, among other things, that—God forbid—if something like this should ever happen to us, I hope we would behave as

well. I hope we would also hold on to our faith as well.

I am impressed that you are moving forward. Most of the children have returned to school, even returned to sports and other activities. I am proud of all of you who are, in your own way, going back to living your lives, looking toward the future, to commencement or college or a summer job or just getting back to the ordinary business of life, which takes an extraordinary effort now. But I have to say, I think what's impressed me most is the way, in the midst of this, you have held on to your faith.

One of the greatest moments of grief in my life occurred 15 years ago, when Hillary and I had to go to the memorial service for a young man who was a senior at Yale University, a Rhodes Scholar, on the football team, the editor of the newspaper, the leader of his class academically. This young man happened to come from an African-American family in our hometown and a poor family at that. His father was a minister in a very small church. And we had the service in the high school auditorium.

His father was lame, and he walked with a pronounced limp. And he gave his son's eulogy, walking down in front of us with his limp, saying, "His mother and I do not understand this, but we believe in a God too kind ever to be cruel, too wise ever to do wrong, so we know we will come to understand it by and by."

In the Scriptures, Saint Paul says that all of us in this life see through a glass darkly. So we must walk by faith, not by sight. We cannot lean on our own wisdom. None of this can be fully, satisfactorily explained to any of you. But you cannot lose your faith.

The only other thing I really want to say to you is that throughout all your grief and mourning and even in your cheers and your renewal and your determination to get on with your life and get this school back together and show people what you are, there is something else you can do, and something I believe that you should do for yourselves and your friends, to make sure they will be remembered. Every special one of them.

Your tragedy, though it is unique in its magnitude, is, as you know so well, not an isolated event. Hillary mentioned there was

another school shooting in Atlanta today. Thankfully, the injuries to the students don't seem to be life threatening. But there were several last year which did claim lives.

We know somehow that what happened to you has pierced the soul of America. And it gives you a chance to be heard in a way no one else can be heard, by the President and by ordinary people in every community in this country. You can help us to build a better future for all our children: a future where hatred and distrust no longer distort the mind or harden the heart; a future where what we have in common is far more important than what divides us; a future where parents and children are more fully involved in each other's lives, in which they share hopes and dreams, love and respect, a strong sense of right and wrong; a future where students respect each other even if they all belong to different groups, or come from different faiths or races or backgrounds; a future where schools and houses of worship and communities are literally connected to all our children; a future where society guards our children better against violent influences and weapons that can break the dam of decency and humanity in the most vulnerable of children.

One thing I would like to share with you that I personally believe very much: These dark forces that take over people and make them murder are the extreme manifestation of fear and rage with which every human being has to do combat. The older you get, the more you'll know that a great deal of life is the struggle against every person's own smallness and fear and anger and a continuing effort not to blame other people for our own shortcomings or our fears.

We cannot do what we need to do in America unless every person is committed to doing something better and different in every walk of life, beginning with parents and students and going all the way to the White House. For the struggle to be human is something that must be a daily source of joy to you, so you can get rid of your fears and let go of your rage and minimize the chance that something like this will happen again.

Because of what you have endured, you can help us build that kind of future, as virtually no one else can. You can reach across

all the political and religious and racial and cultural lines that divide us. You have already touched our hearts. You have provoked Hillary and me and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore to reach out across America to launch a national grassroots campaign against violence directed against young people. You can be a part of that.

You can give us a culture of values instead of a culture of violence. You can help us to keep guns out of the wrong hands. You can help us to make sure kids who are in trouble—and there will always be some—are identified early and reached and helped. You can help us do this.

Two days from now, you're going to have your commencement. It will be bittersweet. It will certainly be different for those of you who are graduating than you thought it was going to be when you were freshmen. But as I understand it, there will be some compensations. Even your archrivals at Chatfield will be cheering you on. When you hear those people cheer for you, I want you to hear the voice of America, because America will be cheering you on. And remember that a commencement is not an end. It is a beginning.

You've got to help us here. Take care of yourselves and your families first. Take care of the school next. But remember, you can help America heal, and in so doing you will speed the process of healing for yourselves.

This is a very great country. It is embodied in this very great community, in this very great school, with these wonderful teachers and children and parents. But the problem which came to the awful conclusion you faced here is a demon we have to do more to fight. And what I want to tell you is, we can—together.

I close here with this story. My wife and I and our daughter have been blessed to know many magnificent people because the American people gave us a chance to serve in the White House. But I think the person who's had the biggest influence on me is the man who is about to retire as the President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

He is 80 years old, he served 27 years in prison. For 14 years he never had a bed to sleep on. He spent most of his years breaking rocks every day. And he told me once about